

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-9 (cancelled).

Claim 10 (new). A zither comprising:

a rigid, hollow, lightweight, non-organic frame extending around the outer periphery of the instrument, configured to provide sufficient strength and stability to support double strings, allowing a chromatically-tuned instrument to sound similar to one that is diatonically-tuned; and

readily removable top and bottom panel members facilitating changes in the instrument's appearance and sound quality.

Claim 11 (new). A zither as in claim 10, wherein the front panel may be replaced without removing the strings.

Claim 12(new). A zither as in claim 10 and further including interchangeable chord bar retaining assemblies; and

readily releasable securement means allowing rapid interchange of the chord bar retaining assemblies whereby the player is capable of playing multiple chord groupings (keys) on a single instrument.

Claim 13 (new). A zither as in claim 10, wherein the bottom panel is configured to increase the volume of the sound chamber defined by the frame and the top and bottom panel members.